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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001556

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL EUN MARR GM BK MK SR IR

SUBJECT: GERMAN VIEWS ON DECEMBER 8 EU FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL MEETING

REF: A. 12/3 KONICK E-MAIL

¶B. BERLIN 1544

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR GEORGE GLASS. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Germany shares our views on the way ahead in Bosnia, but does not want to rule out the possibility (albeit small) of a breakthrough by the time of the March PIC meeting that would allow the OHR to close and EUFOR Althea to be withdrawn on a more accelerated basis. Germany blames Macedonia for not seriously considering name proposals that could have opened the way to progress on its EU membership application. Germany is optimistic about a breakthrough that will finally allow implementation of the EU interim agreement with Serbia, but is strongly discouraging Belgrade from submitting an EU membership application now, arguing that it is premature. Germany regrets that the December 10 European Council statement on Iran is likely to address the full panoply of concerns, thereby diluting the message on the nuclear question. Germany is happy with the re-worked conclusions on the Middle East and is perplexed why Romania and Hungary continue to voice concerns. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Post delivered ref A points to MFA European Correspondent Michael Fluegger on December 4 and followed up to get his reaction on December 7. We also shared points directly with the MFA Middle East and Iran offices.

BOSNIA

¶3. (C) Fluegger said the only quibble Germany had on the U.S. points regarding Bosnia was the emphasis on keeping the Office of the High Representative (OHR) open "at least" through the October 2010 elections. Fluegger noted that there would be another Peace Implementation Council (PIC) meeting in March and that Germany would not want to rule out beforehand a decision to close the OHR at that point. However, he agreed that the chances of the Bosnian parties making the necessary progress by then were probably "only 5 percent."

¶4. (C) Fluegger also emphasized that Germany did not go as far as the UK in insisting that EUFOR Althea remain as long as the OHR stays open. While Germany agreed it was important for Althea to remain in place at its current strength of 2,000 through the October 2010 elections, its viability beyond that date would depend on the willingness of other EU countries to maintain their troops in the force. He expressed concern that Spain was already poised to withdraw its contingent by May; at some point, if such withdrawals continued, EUFOR would no longer be large enough to provide the desired credibility to the Bonn Powers of the High Rep. Fluegger said with some disdain that the UK was pushing for EUFOR Althea to stay in place, even though the UK itself had "only ten soldiers" in the operation. (Comment: Germany has 130 soldiers in Althea. End Comment.)

## MACEDONIA

¶15. (C) Fluegger said that it appeared that there would no progress on Macedonia's EU membership application at either the EU FAC or at the December 10 Summit. He said the German impression was that the Macedonians had not really looked seriously at the name proposals on the table and therefore had missed an opportunity to advance this issue.

## SERBIA

¶16. (C) Fluegger said he was "fairly optimistic" about a breakthrough that would allow the EU go forward in implementing the interim agreement with Serbia, which would govern relations until the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was ratified and came into force. He thought there was a good chance that the Netherlands would drop its long-standing veto based on certification of minimally acceptable cooperation with ICTY.

¶17. (C) Fluegger said Germany was concerned that Serbia would follow this step with an immediate application for EU membership, which Berlin did "not want to see." Germany thought such an application was premature and should only come after the SAA entered force. Fluegger said that if the EU Commission had to do an avis on a Serbian membership application now, the evaluation would have to be negative, given the reforms that Serbia still needed to make. Serbia politicians gave the impression that EU membership was possible within 3-4 years, when in fact, it would take at least 10 years. Fluegger noted that Chancellor Merkel had made this point to Serbian President Tadic during his

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November 15 visit to Berlin.

## IRAN

¶18. (C) Fluegger confirmed that Germany was "absolutely on your side" regarding Iran and was especially pleased that the U.S. was maintaining its emphasis on pursuing a new UNSCR to exert pressure on Iran, if that proves necessary. He noted that the Russians have threatened to abandon cooperation on the UN track if the EU pursues new autonomous sanctions against Iran, so Germany favored having the EU stand down for now. Fluegger said that the December 10 European Council would have an annex to their conclusions focused on Iran. He regretted that, contrary to Germany's desires, the text would not just address the nuclear issue, but also concerns about human rights, the treatment of local embassy employees, etc. as well. He said Germany preferred addressing these issues in a separate document for fear of diluting the message on the nuclear question.

## MIDDLE EAST

¶19. (C) Fluegger noted that the 12-paragraph Swedish draft conclusions on the Middle East had been significantly re-worked and that Germany was now satisfied that they were fair and balanced and not overly critical of Israel. He was perplexed that Romania and Hungary were still blocking approval, notwithstanding German assurances on this point. Fluegger also noted that UK FM Miliband had pushed for stronger language -- going beyond what the EU has said before -- on supporting Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. (See ref B for Germany's reaction to the U.S. message on Israel's settlement moratorium.)

MURPHY